

Estimated Population of People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Rhode Island.

How many persons are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Rhode Island?

To date, there are no definite statistics available on the exact number of Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals in the state of Rhode Island. The data provided in this information sheet, by the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, is an estimate that is based on the national average of persons with hearing loss. In general, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 8.6 percent of United States population ages 3 years and older (varies widely by age) are reported to have hearing problems. This is the national average. However, the figure can be applied, with reservation, to the Rhode Island population.

Rhode Island Population 2000 ¹	Estimated # of Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Percent of Population ²
1,011,960	87,028	8.6%

Sources:

¹ Population information from United States Census Bureau 2001.

² National percentages from the National Center for Health Statistics, Data from the National Health Interview Survey, Series 10, Number 188, Table 1, 1994.

Reasons to Use These Estimates with Reservation

There are several reasons to use these estimates with reservation. First, the figure of 8.6% is the national average. Second, the national average will not apply to every town and city in Rhode Island. Towns with smaller populations may have fewer Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals than the formula suggests. Similarly, large cities will tend to have a greater Deaf and hard of hearing population than would be expected using the 8.6% figure.

Factors that Influence Size of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Populations

Cultural and sociological factors influence the size of the Deaf population in any give place. Historically, Deaf people have lived in places where they could enjoy the physical closeness of other Deaf individuals. As they did not have access to telephones until the advent of the TTY (teletype communication device) in the late 1960's, Deaf people relied on Deaf clubs and social activities for interaction and entertainment. Living in a city allowed for easy access to transportation thus providing access to friends and social events. In spite of technological advances, which allow long-distance communication, the tendency to live in major cities remains a characteristic of the Deaf community. Personal interaction is highly valued by Deaf individuals. In addition, the access and availability of social services, education, interpreter services, and programs for Deaf and hard of hearing, contributes to the large populations in metropolitan areas.